terrified. Mark adds the comment, “Their minds were closed, because they had not understood what Jesus had done in feeding the five thousand.” In other words, didn’t Jesus promise that He would come when needed, and that no barrier of time or space could stop Him?

Mark is talking about this strange Paradox called Jesus Christ. The first story is about the human teacher who gets tired and knows our limitations first-hand . . . He’s in the same boat as we. The second is the unexpected disclosure of one who takes the initiative and calls for a commitment of a deep kind. A reader of the New Testament ought to feel suddenly that this is not magic; but it is a mystery. Jesus didn’t take away all their tensions and stress. But at the same time He is one who gives us power to face them, and the courage to fight against them. He gives us “peace at the heart of endless agitation.”

Last fall we visited again York Cathedral in England. It was a foggy morning and it was hard to find one’s way through the narrow streets. Inside the cathedral, however, I saw a great path of sunlight bathing the floor before the chancel, where the transept cuts the nave. Looking up, I realized that at that place the tower rose high above the fog and caught the sunlight, and brought it down to us. That’s what Mark says in these two stories. Jesus is one like us, but He rises above our fog-boundness and “lets the face of God shine through.”

This ought to help us see that we cannot dissolve the Mystery; but we can help people see where Life is to be found. If the Mystery goes, the Meaning goes too. So biblical criticism and exegesis may at first shock; but we ought to remember that Jesus in His teachings and life was constantly shocking everybody. He must have believed that it was the way to get through to others. It was when their defenses were broken down for the moment that truth and love stood revealed, or a decision for or against Him was made. The faithful preacher will read widely in present-day biblical criticism (Moltmann’s The Crucified God, Jeremias’ New Testament Theology, Herzog’s Liberation Theology, Eichrodt’s Old Testament, et al.). Recently I used John Knox’ little commentary, Romans 5–8, with a group of lay people. Their reactions were so fresh, and their discussion so free about law and grace. They gave me fresh ammunition for a series of sermons on Romans, which I think became existential for all of us.

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Once in a while, with a very familiar portion of scripture, you might find it helpful to have a series of questions prepared; and after the scripture is read, have people discuss for five or ten minutes with their neighbors in the pews the questions you have suggested. I’ve done this with the Lord’s Prayer to good effect. First it was read from both Matthew and Luke in Good News For Modern Man. Then for two Sundays I preached on it: (1) “The Lord’s Prayer—Its Form;” (2)